Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-7. (cancelled)

8. (currently amended) A method of detecting epithelial cancer cells in a biological sample from a mammal, the method comprising the steps of:

~~(i)~~ (a) providing the biological sample from the mammal; and

~~(ii)~~ (b) detecting an increase in copy number of a gene encoding ~~a Pellino 1 polypeptide comprising at least 70% amino acid identity to SEQ ID NO:2 or~~ a Pellino 2 polypeptide comprising at least ~~70%~~ 95% amino acid identity to SEQ ID NO:4 in the biological sample, thereby detecting the presence of epithelial cancer cells in the biological sample.

9. (currently amended) The method of claim 8, wherein the detecting step further comprises:

~~(a)~~ (i) contacting the gene with a probe ~~that selectively hybridizes to~~ specific for the gene under conditions in which the probe selectively hybridizes to the gene to form a stable hybridization complex; and

~~(b)~~ (ii) detecting the hybridization complex.

10. (currently amended) The method of claim 8, wherein the ~~Pellino 1 polypeptide has an amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:2 or~~ gene encoding the Pellino 2 polypeptide ~~has an amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO:4~~ is amplified by a primer set of GATGCTGAAGTCGTCTCATTGG (SEQ ID NO:7) and CCAGTAGTTTAGCCTTTGTGGCTT (SEQ ID NO:8).

11. (cancelled)

12. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~11~~ 8, wherein the epithelial cancer is a lung, colon, or ovarian cancer.

13. (previously presented) The method of claim 8, wherein the mammal is a human.

14-37. (cancelled)

38. (new) A method of detecting epithelial cancer cells in a biological sample from a mammal, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) providing the biological sample from the mammal; and

(b) detecting an increase in copy number of a gene encoding SEQ ID NO:4 in the biological sample, thereby detecting the presence of epithelial cancer cells in the biological sample.

39. (new) The method of claim 38, wherein the detecting step further comprises:

(i) contacting the gene with a probe specific for the gene under conditions in which the probe selectively hybridizes to the gene to form a stable hybridization complex; and

(ii) detecting the hybridization complex.

40. (new) The method of claim 38, wherein the epithelial cancer is a lung, colon, or ovarian cancer.

41. (new) The method of claim 38, wherein the mammal is a human.